

THE TIME HAS COME

Archbishop Dermot Farrell,

Advent Pastoral Letter, 2022

To be read at all Masses 3rd/4th December

I am struck by the phrase from the Letter to the Romans offered to us in the First Sunday of Advent liturgy: ‘You know “the time” has come: you must wake up now.’ (Romans 13:11). Jesus in the Gospel, reflecting on the second coming of the Son of Man, asks us all to stand ready.

In every generation we are asked to be ready, recognising the salvation offered in Christ Jesus, on fire with his Spirit, proclaiming the Gospel in every season, finding new ways to witness to the presence and power of Christ in our own lives and to the people of our time.

Over the past year and more, our parishes have been asked for their thoughts on the future direction of the Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin. We have much to do: supporting people to deepen their faith and relationship with God; creating the structures that support vibrant communities of faith; advocating for those who are on the margins.

The synodal discussions that took place last spring have taught us something new from the heart of the Church. We have rediscovered the value of prayerful reflection, listening to the variety of voices available to us, and discerning together the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The first phase of Building Hope implementation was an invitation to dialogue in parishes, reflecting on the four dimensions of the ‘Framework for Pastoral Renewal’ drawn from the Building Hope Task Force Report. Parishes responded generously with the fruits of that initial conversation, including their proposals for partnership with neighbouring parishes. In September, I published my initial response to that parish material in a document entitled Feedback on Easter 2022 Strategic Planning Process, which I ask parishes to reflect on deeply.

I am now making a further response to you, having listened carefully to your proposals. Following careful analysis and further dialogue, I am writing to each parish to confirm the partnership of parishes arrangements through which I am asking you to realign your efforts and energies to suit the times in which we live.

To this end, your parish will now be in the partnership of parishes of **Athy, Narraghmore, Moone and Castledermot.**

Each parish will retain its identity, its particular sense of community and its financial independence. Within each partnership of parishes, Parish Pastoral Councils, all active parishioners, priests, deacons, parish pastoral workers and voluntary parish leaders, including catechists into the future, are encouraged to renew the missionary aspect of parish life and contribute energetically towards the partnership of local parishes. In this way we can reach out beyond what any one parish might be able to facilitate or imagine. A set of pastoral aids will be provided by the Diocese to help with conversation and action locally. You know the time has come.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas we open our hearts again to Jesus Christ, God-with-us, a light for all the world to see. Even in the darkest and loneliest of places he brings salvation. His message of justice, peace and love sets us out again on a journey, this year and every year, focused on love of God and love of neighbour. 'Let us walk in the light of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths' (Isaiah 2:3). Let us turn our hearts towards Christ, who is the light that will show us the way forward, a light for our footsteps into the future God is preparing with us.

+Dermot Farrell

Archbishop of Dublin